THE

DRAMATIC CENSOR;

OR,

Weekly Theatrical Report.

NUMBER XI.

SATURDAY, MARCH 15, 1800.

INIMICUS *dicta factaque nostra observare infesto animo non cessat, captans nocendi occasionem; quam ne præbeamus, cavemus. Hæc autem cautio sensim affert studium et consuetudinem rectam et inculpatam vitam agendi.*

DRAMATIC WRITERS, who desire to have an EARLY Review of their Publications, are requested to send a Copy to the Editor, at JUSTINS's Printing-Office, Pemberton Row, Gough Square.

DRURY-LANE, SATURDAY, *March* 8, 1800.

BLUE BEARD—*Colman.* THE LYING VALET—*Garrick.*
OF AGE TO-MORROW.

IN addition to the above *items* of this motley bill of fare, the bills of the day announced *The Scotch Ghost*, or *Little Fanny's Love*; butthe indisposition of BOSSI DEL CARO prevented the intended accumulation of puerility and buffoonery. Such a strange medley, as Drury Lane exhibited this evening, is a disgrace to a Theatre-Royal. 'Tis no adequate apology, that the Manager was put to his shifts by the postponement of the New Opera; an audience ought not to be trifled with in this manner.

COVENT-GARDEN, SATURDAY, *March* 8, 1800.
SPEED THE PLOUGH—*Morton.* OSCAR AND MALVINA —*Byrn.*

DRURY-LANE, MONDAY, *March* 10, 1800.
THE COUNTRY GIRL—*Garrick.* BLUE BEARD—*Colman.*

THIS evening was distinguished by the return of Mrs. JORDAN to the stage. Her performance, in the character of *Peggy*, evinced that she retains her accustomed superiority in the *comic* walk. Pert, flippant, rompish characters, are the parts in which she best succeeds, and to which we would wish to see her powers confined. She was received with great and merited applause, to which we readily contribute our humble mite of approbation; though we cannot imitate the example of *The Oracle* and *Morning Post*, the *fulsome* flattery of which papers must be disgusting, even to *nausea*, to a liberal mind—"THALIA is herself again!"—"Mrs. JORDAN's return to the stage constitutes a *new epocha!*" &c. &c.—Such *clumsy* praise may be compared to the doting fondness of the ape, which smothered its favourite brat with caresses. An enemy is not so dangerous as an injudicious friend.

COVENT-GARDEN, MONDAY, *March* 10, 1800.
RAMAH DROOG—*Cobb.* THE JEW AND THE DOCTOR—*Dibdin.*

WITH the exception of the *author*, all the parties concerned

concerned in the fabrication of this Opera have done their duty. The music is pleasing, popular; and, in some instances, grand and scientific: the scenery, dresses, decorations, &c. are magnificent, and the *tout-ensemble* well calculated to delight that proportion of the audience, who prefer show and sound to intellectual enjoyment, and coarse buffoonery to rational amusement.

Miss WATERS has a beautiful air in the second act, which she sings with superior taste, and with a degree of sweetness and richness of modulation peculiarly her own. The compass of this lady's voice, the mellowness of her tones, the fulness with which her notes swell upon the ear, and the happy combination of science and execution, which characterizes her style of singing, distinguish her as the first vocal performer at the Theatre, in parts which blend the beautiful with the sublime. The emphasis with which she gives the passage—

"*My Father is no more!*"

may be more easily felt than described.

MUNDEN possesses such irresistible powers of drollery, that buffoonery in his hands never fails to relax the austerity of the Critic's features, in despite of his better judgment. His *Chillingo* is a rich treat to the lovers of exaggerated humour. The same remark applies to Mr. J. JOHNSTONE, who performs the ridiculous part of *Dr. O'Liffey* with much comic force.

Mrs. MILLS displays her accustomed archness and vivacity, as *Margaret*. In Miss SIMMS we discover the opening germ of future excellence, which authorizes us with confidence to predict, that she will become a most useful and valuable acquisition to the Theatre. She is a lively, spirited, and improving actress. We know not, whether it may be owing to the form of Mrs. CHAPMAN's headdress, and the uncouth diadem she wears, as the princess *Almina*, but her face exhibits the exact archetype of a *beef-eater* *.

The Farce of *The Jew and the Doctor* is a work of merit. Considering the character of most of the *after-pieces*, which have lately been brought forward at our Theatres, it would be little more than *negative* praise to say, that it is superior to any entertainment that has been produced at either house since its appearance. It abounds in true comic humour, just

* We have received a letter of *very friendly advice*, cautioning us against "*wasting* our critical powers on the *inferior* Performers." Who the writer is, we know not, as he has been pleased to assume a fictitious name; but returning him our politest thanks for his kind and benevolent intentions, we must beg leave to apprize him, that the DRAMATIC CENSOR is not under *aristocratical* influence, nor devoted to the office of heaping up fulsome, and, perhaps, *undeserved* panegyric on the *principal* and *leading* Performers of the Theatre. Whilst the duties of our censorial function call upon us to contemplate professional merit with an equal and impartial eye, whether in *high* or *low*, we shall ever experience a peculiar gratification, in fostering *rising* genius, and removing from *modest* worth the baneful shade, which incapacity, under the auspices of arrogance and self-importance, but too frequently casts on superior abilities.

delineation

delineation of character, and conveys purer moral sentiment, in a pleasing and prepossessing dress, than the whole catalogue of our German importations.

DRURY-LANE, TUESDAY, *March* 11, 1800.

THE EGYPTIAN FESTIVAL—*Franklin*. THE LYAR—*S. Foote*.

As a dramatic composition we are sorry to observe, that the *Egyptian Festival* is the very worst production of the season. But, viewed in its true light, as a *puppet-show* upon an enlarged scale, with *living*, instead of *wooden* actors, it possesses the merit of incorporating into *one* the most prominent attractions of a variety of pieces, which have won upon the public by magnificence of scenery, popular music, stage-effect, and other similar sources of recommendation. *Blue-Beard*, *Lodoiska*, *Pizarro*, and even the *Castle Spectre*, in the prison scene, have amply contributed towards the materials of the *Egyptian Festival*, which takes its name from an entertainment given by the English *Governor* of * *some* place in

* The author has omitted to acquaint us with the *name* of the place, over which the English Governor presided. This, to us, appears a very necessary article of information, as we were not apprized, till now, of any British settlement in Egypt. 'Tis a great pity that the inhabitants of this country should be kept in ignorance of the acquisitions they have obtained by a war, which has been attended with such vast profusion of blood and treasure. It is but fair

in Egypt to *Mustapha Muley Bey*. The latter, abusing the hospitality of the British commander, carries off *Violetta*, a young lady under the governor's protection; who, it seems, was rescued from assassins whilst an infant, by the said governor, and sent to England for education. From England she is transported back to Egypt, in the *very natural* hope of one day gaining intelligence concerning her parents. The English governor resolves to take exemplary vengeance on the treachery of *Mustapha*, having, like the generality of parents, disposed of the hearts of others, by trumping up a match, in his own mind, between *Violetta* and his son.

But we shall not attempt to detail the fable of a piece, which can scarcely rank in the class of dramatic compositions, forming a kind of *middle-thing*, between a *pantomime* and a *play*. All that can be deemed necessary is, to give a list of the *dramatis personæ*, and inform the reader, that (of the *few* characters connected with the leading interest of the piece) *Mustapha* is a usurper—*Ali Hassan*, the rightful imprisoned prince—*Murteza*, that prince's son—and that three or four women are concerned in the business; one of whom disguises herself in a military dress, follows her lover from England to Egypt, and pops upon him the moment she sets foot on shore.

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fair, that our *gains* should be ballanced against our *losses*, and that the nation should have the satisfaction of knowing, at least, the *name* of the territories we possess by conquest.

The

The rest may be safely left to the reader's own imagination ; which, with the assistance of a little *novel-reading*, will easily suggest to him the usual routine of *managing these things*. The tyrant is punished—the deposed prince rescued by his son from imprisonment—the wrongs of the injured are redressed; and the lovers rendered happy. The more marvellous, the more out of the common order of nature, the several incidents by which all these blessed effects are accomplished, the better. A tyrant dethrones the lawful prince—immures him in a dungeon—causes the report of *Hassan*'s assassination to be propagated, and possesses himself of the sovereignty. At a moment, when he least expects it, the son of this dethroned, imprisoned prince, falls into his power. Instead of securing his dominion, by putting his *rival out of the way*—in plain Engliſh, murdering him—he commissions the son to murder his father, and arms him for that purpose with a dagger. What any tyrant, that was not more *fool* than *knave*, might easily have foreseen, takes place. The son recognizes his parent ; and, as *Mustapha* (by his very *untyrant-like* negligence in trusting a business of this importance to a jailor, without himself attending to the execution of his orders) lets slip the opportunity of ridding himself of *Murteza*, either by dispatching him, or clapping him safe under lock and key with his father, *Murteza* avails himself of this want of caution, brings the jailor over to his side, and, accompanied by his father, effects his escape through

through a *subterranean* passage—an expedient constantly at hand in *stage-dungeons!* A variety of fortunate circumstances ensue, always in the precise nick of time when most wanted. Lady *Zemira* keeps her head upon her shoulders by the lucky intervention of *Murteza*, who drops, as it were, from the moon, to her assistance, at the critical instant when, like the dying swan, she is preparing for her impending dissolution, by chaunting a song. *Violetta* is rescued from the tyrant's power, by his folly in confiding the keys of his palace to a drunken buffoon; and an English ship of war, which with equal felicity arrives at the most seasonable opportunity, blows his fortress about his ears, till the confusion of plot and arrangement in the conduct of the piece, is totally lost in the confusion of noise, smoke, and vapour, occasioned by the discharge of cannons, mortars, and the demolition of the fortifications. —The *Ram's horns of Jericho* never atchieved greater wonders.

Having detailed thus much of the plot, we conceive no further explanation necessary on this head, except to give a subjoined list of the

DRAMATIS PERSONÆ.

EGYPTIANS.

Mustapha Muley Bey, - - -	Mr. RAYMOND.
Ali Hassan, - - - - - - -	Mr. HOLLAND.
Murteza, - - - - - - - -	Mr. C. KEMBLE.
Jaffa, - - - - - - - -	Mr. CAULFIELD.
Priest, - - - - - - - -	Mr. CORY.

Yezid,

Yezid, (Chief of the Arabs) - - Mr. DIGNUM.
Kedah - - - - - - - - - Mr. SURMONT.
Uscola, - - - - - - - - - Mr. SUETT.
Zemira, - - - - - - - - - Madame MARA.
Nigra, - - - - - - - - - Mrs. BLAND.

ENGLISH.

Governor, - - - - - - - - - Mr. POWELL.
Boomley, - - - - - - - - - Mr. KELLY *.
Mainstay, - - - - - - - - Mr. SEDGWICK.
Officer, - - - - - - - - - Mr. WEBB.
Cook, - - - - - - - - - - Mr. SPARKS.
Longbow, - - - - - - - - - Mr. BANNISTER.
Violetta, - - - - - - - - - Miss STEPHENS.
Jackina, - - - - - - - - - Miss DECAMP.

Chorus—Mamelukes, Arabs, &c.

The Scene throughout lies in Egypt.

The *dialogue* of the New Opera, with the exception of two or three lame attempts at wit, which never soar beyond *Joe Miller*, presents one uniform mass of dullness and insipidity. We must, however, do the author the justice to observe, that he has displayed a *manliness* of sentiment, very unusual in compositions of this description, and for which we readily give him considerable credit. He has disdained to avail himself of that perpetual resource of intellectual debility, the fleeting politics of the day; and though the nature of his subject affords many opportunities of *entrapping* applause, by *party allusions*, he has, in this respect, refrained from imi-

* This character was on the second night more successfully sustained by Mr. TRUEMAN.

tating the example of most of his dramatic cotemporaries. This argues a liberality of mind, and an elevation of soul, which, added to collateral circumstances, on which we shall very soon have occasion to expatiate, lead us to conclude, that Mr. FRANKLIN's errors originate less in a *want* of talents and mental vigour, than in a *misapplication* of his powers, and a *subserviency* to the depraved taste of the age. If we may be permitted to hazard an opinion upon the faculties of another, we should attribute the author's failings to remissness, and a censurable preference of ease and profit, to bold exertion and fair reputation. He appears to be well aware of the preposterous passion of the town, for *show* and *sing-song*, and has taken advantage of this mental distemper, in favour of his pecuniary interest, at the expence of literary fame. Another error, into which, in our humble opinion, he appears systematically to have fallen, is a mistaken appreciation of his powers, and the natural bent of his genius. Comic humour does not appear to us to be Mr. FRANKLIN's *forte*; he possesses talents of too serious and dignified a nature to assimilate with the degradation of pantomime and puppet-show.

In proof of this assertion, we shall adduce a specimen of the Songs of the New Opera, which, though in general written with less care than we can approve of, furnish in many instances a striking contrast to the common level of theatrical versification. They are, in the aggregate, of the serious

cast,

cast, and (greatly to the author's credit) untinctured with that spirit of buffoonery, and senseless jargon, which disgrace the vile rhapsodies of ******, and the bard of *Sans Souci.*

The following Air, given (we are sorry to say *very indifferenly*) by Mr. BANNISTER, is truly *anacreontic*, and breathes (with the exception of a trifling inconsistency which we have commented upon in the *note*) a vein of sprightly fancy, gallantry, and humour. The concluding stanza, in particular, contains an image, which any writer might feel proud to challenge as his own.

AIR. LONGBOW.

WHEN I drink the purple juice,
Oh! what pleasure then is mine!
Wonders can the tree produce,
Sacred to the God of wine!

When the flowing bowl I drain,
Rapturous joys the draught can give,
Then I'm free from care and pain,
Then alone I'm sure to live.

When I taste the luscious grape,
Ever happy, full of mirth,
I assume * a *nobler shape*,
I'm the wisest *dog* on earth.

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* Here the author, in our humble apprehension, has sacrificed propriety to colloquial vulgarism. To style himself *a dog*, in the self same breath, where he boasts of assuming a *nobler shape* than even the *human form*, falls little short of nonsense and moral contradiction.

Ah! but when with wine I sip,
That far sweeter cup of love,
Imag'd by my charmer's lip,
Blest am I, as gods above!

Violetta's Air, in the same act, affords a specimen of the pathetic, illustrated with a truly classical metaphor—

CALM, as the bosom of the main,
When halcyons build their nest,
Will be, when I my love regain,
This poor, fond, trembling breast.

But not more troubled are the waves,
When roaring thunders roll,
Than is, whilst HE the ocean braves,
My ever-aching soul.

Yet, ah! return, ye happy days,
Which love and joy impart;
Let me once more enraptur'd gaze,
And press him to my heart.

Yezid's Air, Act II. likewise boasts a descriptive image of great beauty. We have only to regret, that the diction is not more nervous and poetical. The author has indulged in too free a use of the *particles*.

As a specimen of *comic* humour, the following Song, by *Uscola*, (to which SUETT does ample justice) is entitled to considerable commendation.

THOUGH Fortune's fav'ring breezes fan,
And grant us all our wishes;
Yet, short would be the life of man,
And 'twere not for the dishes.

Nice

Nice eat the fishes, O!
Savoury are the dishes, O!
The sweetest hours that e'er I pass,
Are pass'd among the dishes, O!

And, next to them, the happiest time
I lead among the lasses;
Then want I music's sweetest chime,
The jingling of the glasses.
These are my wishes, O!
These are my wishes, O!
To laugh my jolly days among
The lasses, glasses, dishes, O!

Viewing the New Opera precisely in the same light as we do, as a *dramatized pantomime*, as an appeal to the *senses*, not the *judgment*, the Managers have been profusely liberal in the scenic department, the dresses, decorations, &c. The views, among which a distant prospect of the isle of *Pharos* deserves to be particularly noticed, reflect great credit upon the painter. They are elegant, and characteristic of the manners of the country, in which the action is laid. The procession, in the first act, the dances, &c. have afforded ample latitude for parade and pageantry.

Among the prominent novelties of the *Egyptian Festival*, we may justly rank the appearance of Madame MARA. As a *singer*, her powers are indisputable; but as a *performer*, she exhibits herself in a light, which alternately provokes our *ridicule* and *pity*. Her *delivery* is an absolute *libel* on the profession. To the defects of a *foreign* pronunciation, she joins

joins a natural impediment of speech, which partakes too strongly of a *lisp*, to warrant her bearing part in the *prose dialogue* of a play. What could possibly induce her to appear before the public under such disadvantages, unless she did it in compliment to the composer, we are at a loss to conjecture; nor less are we puzzled to account for the supineness of an audience, which can patiently tolerate such puny efforts. Even KELLY, with all his native insipidity and monotonous croak, is passable, when placed in the scale of comparison with the heroine of the *Egyptian Festival*.

The part of *Mustapha*, if the author had consulted the interest of his piece, ought to have been assigned to BARRYMORE. Mr. C. KEMBLE *made the most* of *Murteza*, as did BANNISTER (with the exception of his songs) of *Longbow*, and SUETT of *Uscola*. The rest of the male performers had very inferior parts. Miss DECAMP maintained the character of *Jackina*, with her wonted sprightliness and animation. Mrs. BLAND, as *Nigra*, exerted her vocal powers with the happiest effect; and Miss STEPHENS, as the representative of *Violetta*, sang with much taste and skill.

The music *composed*, (we think the *substitution*, or at least the *addition* of the word *compiled*, would not have been amiss) is, upon the whole, pleasing, though it bears in many instances too great a resemblance to certain *Italian* airs. Neither can it always

claim

claim the merit of being *appropriate*. *Zemira's* Song in the first act—

"*Ye spirits dark, ye fiends accurst!*" &c.

is not sufficiently spirited and vigorous for an incantation: it ought to be more in the *bravura* style.

Supported by the strength of written orders, the New Opera went off decently during the first act. But the indiscreet zeal of private friendship, by clapping and *encoring*, without bounds or discrimination, provoked a spirit of hostility towards the close of the second act, which increased with the progress of the piece, till ultimately disapprobation became predominant; nor could all the buffoonery of SUETT, in his humorous Song—

"*Though Fortune's favouring breezes fan*," &c.

prevail upon the audience to indulge him with a patient hearing. On the announcement of the repetition of the New Opera on Thursday, the sense of the house, if fairly taken, seemed to decide in the negative.

COVENT-GARDEN, TUESDAY, *March* 10, 1800.

SPEED THE PLOUGH—*Morton*. OSCAR AND MALVINA—*Byrn*.

DRURY-LANE, THURSDAY, *March* 13, 1800.

THE EGYPTIAN FESTIVAL—*Franklin*. THE WEDDING-DAY—*Mrs. Inchbald*.

THE New Opera was considerably curtailed; and, of course, considerably improved, on the second

cond representation. We were greatly pleased with the omission of KELLY's song in Act II. This gentleman's voice, at all times croaking and effeminate, becomes ten-fold disgusting, when he personates a *sea-officer*. His *look*, likewise, ill accords with the assumption of a character, to which we naturally attach the idea of boldness, manliness, hardihood, and intrepidity.

The bombardment of the fort, at the conclusion of the Opera, went off better than on the preceding night. Of course, the thunder of guns and mortars, with the suffocating smoke, stench, and vapour, which pervaded every part of the house, rouzed the audience from a state of lethargy and torpor, to a contrasted scene of bustle and alarm, well calculated to please *weak* minds, and the curtain dropped with less opposition and reprobation, than on the preceding night.

Mrs. JORDAN sustained the part of *Lady Contest*, in the Entertainment. Mr. KING was *Sir Adam*, and *Lord Rakeland* found a representative in the person of Mr. DE CAMP.

COVENT-GARDEN, THURSDAY *March* 13, 1800.

RAMAH DROOG—*Cobb*. HARTFORD BRIDE—*Pearce*.

"*Wine does wonders*," appears to be a great favourite with the Royal family, who visited the Theatre this evening. As a *spectacle*, it indisputably possesses many attractions.

THEATRICAL

THEATRICAL CRITICISM, &c.

Involving a candid Investigation of the Pamphlet, entitled,

"A STATEMENT OF THE DIFFERENCES SUBSISTING BETWEEN THE PROPRIETORS AND *Eight* PERFORMERS OF THE THEATRE-ROYAL, COVENT-GARDEN."

Given in the Correspondence that has passed between them.

[*Continued from page* 332.]

PERFECTLY coinciding with the doctrine laid down by Mr. HARRIS, in his first letter to the *malecontents*, (see *Statement*, &c. page 6) "that every Performer is bound by his own specific agreement," and has no right *individually* to demand, much less *to form a combination, for the purpose of extorting*, additional privileges and advantages, foreign to the provisions of his engagement; we concluded our last week's *Strictures*, with a copy of the articles of agreement, to the due observance of which the Proprietors and Performers have reciprocally pledged themselves. 'Tis by this criterion we mean to appreciate the merits of the dispute, and from the tenor of this document, we shall endeavour to award equal justice to both parties.

As the said deed expressly fixes the charge of a Benefit, exclusive of all supernumerary expences, at the sum of £.140, we readily concede, that those Performers, and those *only*, who have subscribed to articles, *with this clause in their favour*, have an undoubted

doubted* right to avail themselves of the advantage it affords, during the full term of their specific contract with the Manager. But no actor † *not* under articles,

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* We do not understand, nor have, indeed, the *malecontents* themselves advanced the charge, that any attempt has been made, on the part of the Proprietors, to infringe upon this right, by imposing the additional charge for a Benefit, or levying the augmented fine, on any Performer, under the *old* articles. The circular letter transmitted by the Treasurer, is to be considered merely as a timely notice of future regulations, the operation of which was not intended to take place in the instance of any individual, till the term of his present contract should expire. It may, therefore, well excite our wonder, that so much clamour should be raised by these *malecontents*, touching a right, which the Proprietors have shown no wish to violate, or trench upon, whilst it continues in legal force. This is a circumstance strongly entitled to the consideration and attention of the public.

† For further explanation on this topic, the reader is referred to the first part of our *Strictures*, page 303. He will there find, that *two* of these eight *malecontents*, have not even the shadow of a plea for complaining of the increased expence of a Benefit, (were it even *immediately* exacted) as an infringement of their rights; the one *not* being under articles, the other having *subscribed* to the clause enacting the additional charge, as well as to the augmented fine for the refusal of a character; which said two clauses form the groundwork of their alledged grievances. We believe we might select a *third* person from the list, and indeed the very individual to whom the *authorship* of this pamphlet is generally attributed, who complains with as little cause and justice, as the *two* we have just alluded to—the *learned* gentleman being under *no* regular engagement, but depending solely on a *verbal* agreement, which the *honour*, not the *interest*, of the Manager induces him to hold sacred. The *concilium abeundi* was given to the party in question, in consequence of his

articles, still less an actor who has *subscribed to the new regulations*, can claim exemption on this plea. Nor will the provisions of this clause continue to operate, even in behalf of those who *now* are entitled to its benefit, after the expiration of the term of their respective engagements.

This concession, however, though it may offer certain restrictions to the *immediate* enforcement of the increased charge of a Benefit, in the case of individuals, whose *unexpired* contract entitles them to this privilege, at the former price of £.140, does not militate against the principle of the measure, nor annihilate the right of the Proprietors to adopt new regulations in their future engagements. The *malecontents*, indeed, may persist in their opinion, that no arrangements ought to be tolerated, in the advantages of which they do not equally participate with the Proprietors. Hence they may conceive themselves justified in *demanding*, that a system, which experience has proved to be highly detrimental to the interests of the firm, should still be pertinaciously continued, because *they*, forsooth, were gainers by that system, however greatly the concern itself might suffer by it. *They* may feel thoroughly convinced of their undoubted right and claim to the most profitable part of the season, and wish to *speed their benefit plough*, as best suits their own profit and

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his capricious refusal of a character, (in which refusal he obstinately persisted): but this prudent *malecontent* knew his own interest too well to accept of the proferred advice.

convenience; but, common sense and common justice, in our humble apprehension, will award the *first fruits* of the harvest to the *owners* of the farm; and think a *liberal gleaning*, in addition to their regular wages, ample recompence for the *servants*.

To follow these *malecontents* through all their sophistical mazes, and that jesuitical labyrinth of false deductions from false premises, in which they have fairly lost and bewildered themselves, and in which, it should seem, they hope to perplex, entangle, and confound the good sense of their readers, would be a tedious and unprofitable task. We have already sufficiently expatiated on the *modesty* of their requisitions to be admitted to a *co-partnership* in the firm, without going through the usual ceremony of *purchase*; we shall, therefore, in general pass them by unnoticed, when we find them *harping on this string*, and leave them to pursue their ingenious calculations on principal and interest, in the hope that *practice* will at length lead to such great *proficiency* in the study of arithmetic, that instead of committing school-boy blunders, they will favour the mathematical world with corrected tables of *logarithms*.

We must, however, offer a few animadversions on that part of their *Statement*, which compares their *present* with their *past* situation. " It is manifest (they write, page 31,) that Performers have been deprived of many valuable advantages relative to their Benefits, which they enjoyed when the nightly charges were only £64. 5*s*. And what advantages,

which

which they did not possess at that period, do they now enjoy, when the charges are rated at £160.? *Simply a larger house, and the advanced prices of admission!*" Now what these *simple* advantages are, the reader will at once perceive from the returns of their several *Benefit receipts* last season, as stated by the treasurer. This *simple* advantage of an enlarged house, added to the *simple* advance in the price of admission, brought Mr. INCLEDON, the sum of £619. 1*s.*; Mr. HOLMAN, £350. 2*s.*; Mr. POPE, £335. 19*s.* 6*d.*; Mrs. POPE, £391. 6*d.*; Mr. MUNDEN, £630. 12*s.* 6*d.*; Mr. FAWCETT, £532. 6*s.* 6*d.*; Mr. H. JOHNSTON, £334. 3*s.* 6*d.*; Mrs. H. JOHNSTON, £401. 15*s.*; Mr. J. JOHNSTONE, £478.; and Mr. KNIGHT, £392. 3*s.* *Simple* as these advantages may justly be styled, and *trifling* as are the receipts of these *Benefit-mendicants*, (totally unworthy the *pocketing* of such exalted characters) would any individual among the whole groupe exchange the *simple* advantages he *now* enjoys, for the full possession of all and singular the former *valuable* advantages, the loss of which these *malecontents* so pathetically lament? Or, to put the question still closer, would any one of them consent to take the *average* of his Benefit receipts, when the charge was only £64. 5*s.* the Proprietors paying the balance, to complete the sum of £160. now demanded, and receiving in return the *surplus* of the night's receipts above the said average? We believe it requires little skill in the art of divination, to predict their answer.

We

We now meet with a curious argument in plea for a *reduction* of their Benefit charges. Mr. ASHLEY, the worthy and respectable Conductor of the *Lent Oratorios*, finding it more to his advantage to *hire* a house for his performances than to *build* one, enters into an agreement with the Proprietors of Covent-Garden Theatre, for the use of the said Theatre, on the nights when custom has *proscribed* the representation of dramatic compositions. *Ergo*, because the Proprietors, who incur, not only the *suspension of contingent gain, but certain and continued expence*, by the *unsuspended* payment of rent, taxes, insurance, &c. &c. receive a stated compensation for their losses: the amount of this compensation, whatever it may be, is to be divided, forsooth, among the Actors, by nice, mathematical distribution; or, rather, to use their own words, by a *reduction* (the *ratio* of which these gentlemen, no doubt, will take upon themselves to compute by logarithmical process) of their Benefit expence. This demand, it must be confessed, comes with peculiar grace from a *malecontent Committee*; one of whom, by the *indulgence* (see our former number, page 330) of the Proprietors, is *permitted* to derive *additional emolument* from the performance of those very *Oratorios*, on which *he*, (for the act and deed of *all*, implicates each *individual*; and, *vice versa*, the misconduct of the *individual* entails responsibility upon the *whole body*) as a member of the said self-elected *malecontent Committee*, founds a claim for the reduction of the expences

pences of a Benefit; which, it appears, brought him a receipt exceeding Six Hundred Pounds!

On the strength of *arguments* such as these, the *malecontent* Performers "*presume*, (their talents in the presuming line are unquestionable) that enough has been said to prove, that, for many years, Actors have received their Benefits on terms that justice cannot sanction." Most unfortunately it so happens, that *presumption*, however satisfactory and convincing it may be to these gentlemen, does not completely meet the ideas of the disinterested reader. Had they, instead of *presuming*, actually *proved*, that the Proprietors had *violated* their engagements—had they *proved* their own right to a Benefit on their *own* terms, and under such regulations as *they themselves should please to appoint*, then, indeed, we might feel induced to acquiesce in the justice of their complaints; and *then* might we, probably, be persuaded to retract the assertion we made, (page 305) that their allusion to CHRISTOPHER RICH, *was not a case in point*. But till *then*, they must give us leave to question the pertinency of their remarks, and to pause, till they have established their *title* to the immunities for which they are so clamorous, before we consent to pronounce the Proprietors guilty of *usurpation*, in refusing to accede to the *requisitions* of a body of *malecontents*, who do not appear to possess a legal claim to the privileges they so imperiously demand.

Still elated with a becoming sense of their own consequence

consequence and importance, they again relapse into their old error, and considering themselves in the light of *principals*, not *agents*, recommence their masterly speculations on the eventual balance of profit and loss, on a capital, embarked in a joint-proprietorship of the Theatre. As this part of their pamphlet is a direct, though covered attack upon Mr. LEWIS, the gentleman who recently purchased a share in the property, and as the misrepresentations industriously propagated by the *malecontents*, and their partizans, led us (we are not ashamed to acknowledge ourselves in error—

Hominis est errares insipientis vero perseverare in errore)

to comment in terms of *unmerited* severity, as the case now appears, on that gentleman's conduct, in the Fourth Number of the DRAMATIC CENSOR we conceive it our duty to embrace with alacrity the present opportunity of doing justice to the character of a person, whom others *designedly*, and we ourselves *unintentionally*, have wronged.

The whole of this passage is very artfully drawn up, and worded with a degree of elaborate care, which palpably betrays a preconcerted plan of warping the public mind, and throwing all the odium of the dispute, between the Proprietors and the *glorious Eight*, (as Mr. MURPHY, in his curious epistle, styles these *malecontents*) upon Mr. LEWIS, by darkly insinuating, that their pretended grievances have originated in encroachments made by that gentleman,

tleman on their rights and privileges, since the period of his having commenced a joint-proprietor of the Theatre. To prove that we do not put a false construction on their words, we shall give a literal extract from their pamphlet, and then comment upon its tendency.

" The profits of the concern, (they write page 32) to justify the rate of a *late purchase* in it, must be nearly trebled since Mr. HARRIS commenced Proprietor.

" In all *transfers* of dramatic property, it should be considered by the new purchasers, that they enter into a concern, which gives them the management of a professional body, possessed of many privileges. And, though all of them are not confirmed in the especial manner a Benefit right has been, still most of them are established, by what is allowed to constitute law—immemorial usage. Proprietors, therefore, cannot be justified in abolishing what they find thus established; and it will prove a shallow plea for their abolition or infringement, that they may tend to lessen what managers *choose to term their profits*; (this sentence is justly entitled to particular notice) for, as the privileges exist at the time the purchase is made, the purchase of course is, or should be, made with due consideration of their existence."

That it behoves every purchaser, whether of dramatic property, or any other kind of estate, to weigh with attentive consideration, the several circum-

stances under which he concludes that purchase, we readily allow. But it does not thence follow, that the new Proprietor is under an indispensible obligation to maintain every thing in *statu quo*, as he finds it. It may happen, for instance, in the purchase of an estate, that the former owner has been neglectful of his interests, and has suffered others to reap and possess advantages which legally appertain unto himself. But is it for that reason incumbent upon the new purchaser to forego his just rights, in compliment to the remissness of his predecessor? Does the *buyer*, with the title deeds, bargain for the carlessness and negligence of the *seller?* May he not, in concluding the terms of his purchase, have had a watchful eye to these dormant rights and privileges? May not this consideration have induced him to offer a higher price? And, to make the application of this general principle to the present question, has not Mr. LEWIS, as joint-proprietor of a Theatre, by purchase, a right, a most undoubted right, to avail himself of every fair and honourable opportunity of augmenting his profits? Is he to apply to his Performers (for their language, we must confess, almost warrants the interrogation) for such a share of gain, as "*they may choose*" to allow him? Are these glorious eight leading and principal *malecontents* now, for the first time, to be informed that *money* (to adopt a homely phrase) *makes money?* that the man, with money at command, has various advantages in concluding a bargain over the man that has none? Is

Mr.

Mr. LEWIS, or any other gentleman in a similar predicament, bound to submit to the deprivation of his rights, in deference to usage and custom? How far circumstances may induce him to wave a part of his just claims, in compliance with precedent, becomes a question of *prudence*. This is a point on which it rests with his own feelings and sense of propriety to decide: the other party have no vote in the deliberation.

But to proceed in our remarks; the *malecontents* having, as they suppose, made good their requisition, that every thing in the management of the Theatre (provided, be it distinctly understood, that their *own interest* is thereby promoted and consulted) shall remain in *statu quo*, make a pitiful appeal to a generous public, which no doubt must greatly commiserate their hapless case, when informed, that, with the exception of Mr. INCLEDON, not one of these *glorious eight* receives more than £.380 (they forget to take into the account the receipts of their Benefit, amounting nearly to an equal sum) for his laborious nine month's service. And then, to add to their distress, even this pitiful sum is liable to "capricious deductions, whenever the Proprietors choose to shut up the House for the rehearsal of a pantomime"—a case which happens, perhaps *once*, and scarcely once on an average, in the course of the whole season. But this is not all; they have other and more afflicting cause of complaint and grievance. Actors, with all their assumed dignity, are,

after all, it seems, but *men*, but flesh and blood, like the rest of the children of Adam. Of course, they are liable to illness; and thus, it appears, an "actor's income is held on a tenure of the most precarious nature: temporary malady suspends it; permanent disease and *death* annihilate it." Poor gentlemen! how greatly is their lot to be pitied! However, if there be any truth in the well known adage—

Solamen miseris socios habuisse malorum—

we can inform them, for their solace and consolation, that this is the precise situation in which the far greater part of the community stand; and that not less useful class of community than themselves, though not so well able to lay up in store against a rainy day, *viz.* servants, and every description of persons who depend for support on their own personal exertions.

But now, alas! comes the worst, the very worst of all—

"*Thus ill begins, and worse is still behind.*"

The public, the ungrateful public, it appears, make so little account of these great, principal, and leading men, when they are no longer in a capacity to amuse the town, that the funds for the relief of decayed actors dare not encounter the hazard of taking a Benefit, because the town will not purchase a sufficient quantity of tickets to indemnify the expence. Sorry, sincerely sorry are we, for the sake

of

of suffering individuals, that this should be the case; but such the event always *will* be in the instance of a class of men, who are *only popular whilst public*, and whose loss is easily supplied in the public estimation by the next successor. This consideration, we think, should teach these *leading* Performers a useful lesson. Probably, with all their vast merit, the town will care as little about them, when they secede from their public employment, as it did for their predecessors. And haply, with the exception of *two* among them, at the utmost, the Manager might be able to beat up for recruits in any Provincial company in the kingdom, against the next Theatrical campaign, that would please the town just as well, and likewise conduct themselves with greater respect and propriety towards their employers. We have a constitutional aversion to wound the feelings of individuals, otherwise we could name some of these *glorious eight*, whose talents we have seen eclipsed by the itinerant heroes of a country fair.

[*To be Continued.*]

AMICUS will be pleased to accept of our best thanks for his polite Letter; the contents of which, he may rest assured, will be duly attended to.

☞ Correspondents are requested to transmit their communications, *post paid*, to the Editor, at W. JUSTINS's Printing Office, Pemberton Row, Gough Square, Fleet Street.